



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Intermediate School District Superintendents
Special Education Directors
Early On® Coordinators

FROM: Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D., Director
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

DATE: December 18, 2003

SUBJECT: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, Natural Environments Provisions

The Federal Regulations for Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have required, since 1989, that children birth to three with disabilities must, to the maximum extent appropriate, receive early intervention services in settings where their peers without disabilities participate. The actual language “natural environments” was added in the 1991 amendments to the IDEA Part C. The 1997 amendments of the IDEA further strengthened the requirement related to natural environments. States were required to develop policies and procedures for the provision of early intervention services in natural environments and to include in Individualized Family Service Plans a justification for each early intervention service that could not be provided in a natural environment.

As you are aware, Michigan is currently participating in ongoing Federal continuous improvement and focused monitoring of Parts B and C of the IDEA. Michigan must address compliance findings regarding the provision of services in natural environments. The attached document is an important step in the improvement process. It has been developed for *Early On* service coordinators and service providers and is intended to provide them with information, expectations, tools, and resources that will support the needed changes in current practice.

I am requesting that you review the document and share it with your *Early On* service coordinators and service providers. I would encourage you to take advantage of the *Early On* Training and Technical Assistance system to schedule needed training and consultation in this area.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa Winborne at 517-335-4865.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to young children and their families.

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • (517) 373-3324